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Official Business

Panel Urges Suspension of Officer Who Aided Fugitive

The Los Angeles Police Department panel that found a veteran sergeant guilty of protecting his fugitive son recommended a punishment of 33 days' suspension without pay, a penalty that must be reviewed by Chief Willie Williams, police sources said Wednesday.

The three-member Board of Rights panel recommended that Sgt. Dennis Peitch be suspended for "inappropriately assisting" the travels of his son, a fugitive suspected of robbing banks in Canyon Country and Northridge in 1993.

Police sources described the case as highly unusual and emotional. They said Peitch, a highly regarded sergeant who is often chosen by other officers to represent them as a defense advocate in disciplinary matters, was placed in a tough position.

Panel members, who refused to discuss the case Wednesday, said they had never heard of a similar case.

Peitch's attorney did not return telephone requests for comment Wednesday.

But police sources said Peitch denied withholding information about his son's whereabouts and said he insists that he is innocent of wrongdoing. He was cleared on three other charges of withholding information and failing to cooperate with FBI and internal investigators.

The penalty, which could have ranged from a reprimand to dismissal, will be reviewed by the chief in the next several weeks.

U.S. Files for Injunction Against Palmdale Woman

Federal officials sought an injunction Wednesday against a **Palmdale** woman with ties to the Montana "freemen" one day after the FBI searched a hotel where she was holding a seminar.

On Monday—the day federal agents in Montana raided the "freemen's" ranch—FBI agents searched Mary Elizabeth Broderick's house and confiscated a computer, computer discs and rifles, Broderick's husband, Richard, told reporters. On Tuesday, agents searched rooms in the Ibsen House Hotel, where Broderick held a seminar, and the rooms of some seminar participants.

On Wednesday, the U.S. attorney's office in Los Angeles filed a noncriminal complaint against Broderick and up to 22 alleged accomplices, seeking to bar her from issuing allegedly worthless checks of the kind promoted by LeRoy Schweitzer. Broderick and Schweitzer call them "warrants" backed by millions of dollars the government owes the public.

More than $30 million in such checks have been received by the government, court documents allege. A federal judge in Los Angeles is scheduled to hear the matter on Monday.

MTA Board Selects Acting CEO as New Transit Chief

Los Angeles County transit officials on Wednesday unanimously approved the selection of Joseph E. Drew as the new chief executive officer of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. He will receive $167,640 a year.

"My sleeves are rolled up, and that's the way it will stay," said Drew, a decorated combat pilot and former Kern County chief administrator who has been acting chief of the giant transit agency since Franklin E. White's ouster last December.

Drew, 52, will have his work cut out for him overseeing the politically charged agency and its troubled subway project.

Now It's Nina's Turn to Be Discovered

The replica of Columbus' favorite ship docks in Long Beach. Visitors are welcomed on board to learn more about the famous explorer.

By LAURA ACCINELLI
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Photo by PERRY C. RIDDLE / Los Angeles Times

Oscar Cherry attends to the sails of the Nina, a replica of the ship which took Christopher Columbus to the New World.

Christopher Columbus never made it to the West Coast, but half a millennium after he discovered the New World for King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, his favorite ship sails the Pacific blue.

It's not the real thing, of course, but a 85-foot replica.

Crafted completely by hand, the Nina docked Wednesday in Long Beach at Shoreline Village's downtown marina for 12 days in port. It arrived already a star. Its credits include the Ridley Scott film "1492."

Through April 8 visitors can tour what Archaeology magazine has called "the most historically correct Columbus replica ever built."

"People are flabbergasted by how much they learn," said captain Morgan Sanger who sold his Virgin Islands shipyard to assume the Nina's helm. "They know Christopher Columbus, they know the names of his ships, but they don't know all of the really interesting things."

Such as: By the time Columbus got the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria, they were old and in need of constant repair. After all, they were going to fall off the face of the Earth, so the king and queen of Spain were not about to sacrifice the best of their fleet.

And on the first voyage, Columbus had to pull into the Canary Islands because the Pinta was having steering trouble. It was there that he decided to sail with the trade winds and re-rigged the Nina's foremast and mainmast with square sails, the better to hold the breeze.

Below deck were horses, cows and pigs suspended in slings. A crew of about 25 slept on the 68-foot deck wherever they could. The Nina's second return voyage carried more than 120 people—Spanish settlers who didn't want to stay.

On board this time is Oscar Cherry, assistant fire chief in Bowling Green, Ky. He happened upon the Nina docked on the Ohio River and pestered the captain to hire him for the recent 34-day voyage from Brownsville, Texas, through the Panama Canal to San Diego.

Cesar Sarmento is the first mate on board the Nina, which is docked at Shoreline Village for a 12-day stay.

Cesar Sarmento has been with the ship all along, traveling more than 75,000 miles with the Nina since December 1991, when the vessel left the banks of the Una River in Valencia on the coast of Brazil. A fisherman at home, he is first mate on the ship his family built.

Eighth-generation Portuguese shipwrights worked naturally shaped timbers with only adzes, axes, handsaws and chisels. They fashioned the keel from a single piece of wood in crafting the 15th century caravel, a common Age of Discovery trading vessel appreciated by both explorers and pirates for its speed and maneuverability.

The Nina's hull is in the Scandinavian style, her rudder reminiscent of a Chinese junk's. A Brazilian textile mill in business since the 17th century made the nearly 2,000 square feet of sail—all hand-stitched.

Built without blueprints in the manner of 15th century shipwrights, the replica emerged after much research for the Columbus Foundation by American engineer and maritime historian John Patrick Sarsfield.

The group of historians, nautical archeologists and tall-ship sailors based in the British Virgin Islands had dreamed of re-creating all three of Columbus' ships to commemorate the 500th anniversary of his voyage in 1992.

The flagship Santa Maria was a freighter and not much missed by Columbus when she ran aground and sank. "She was very heavy and not suitable for the business of discovery," he wrote in his journal. The Pinta was a caravel like the Nina, but she disappeared from history without a trace after the first voyage.

It was the Nina that especially enchanted the explorer. After the first voyage, he bought a half-interest in her and deemed her the flagship of a 117-ship colonizing voyage to the New World.

So, when the foundation found itself with less funding than expected, it was the Nina that the group decided to build.

Half of the $600,000 cost was covered by a private loan that the foundation is still repaying. It charges a small admission fee for tours of the ship.

"When vessels go into a maritime museum, it's the end of their stories," Sanger said.

"They are static, dying, no one looks after them. But at sea, they go on. This is the only authentic 15th century caravel. It's important that people see it."

NEWSLETTERS

Southeast

Man Says Animal Rights Activist May Have Stolen His Family's Cat

If **Long Beach** resident Bob Levy sounds a tad defensive, it is with good reason: for 11 years his family loved and cared for Stripey, a Maine coon cat who they believe was stolen last weekend by a woman who described herself as an animal rights activist.

"From Day One she's always been a scruffy-looking kitty," Levy said, referring to standard attributes of the unusual breed. "She's always been thin." But, he says, that's no reason for some stranger to snatch her.

A neighbor across the street was hosting a garage sale Saturday when a woman who described herself as a member of an animal rights club saw Stripey and inquired as to her owners, Levy said.

Absent any other clues to explain the cat's sudden disappearance, the Levys have contacted animal rights groups for leads on their pet's whereabouts. Otherwise, all they know is that the woman said she lived in Westminster.

Levy described Stripey as a two-tone gray cat with a reddish back. Anyone with information is asked to call the Levys at (310) 596-7251.

Only in L.A.

BY STEVE HARVEY

Oscar leftovers:

Actress June Lockhart phoned to say that she knows the Scottish bagpiper who greeted best director winner Mel Gibson outside Morton's restaurant the other night.

"He's Thomas Allan and he happens to be the butcher at my market in Santa Monica here—The Farms market," she said.

Sure enough, we contacted Allan, who confirmed that he was hired by actress Jodie Foster, a friend of Gibson.

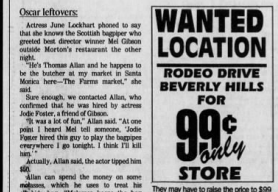
"It was a lot of fun," Allan said. "At one point I heard Mel tell someone, 'Jodie Foster hired this guy to play the bagpipes everywhere I go tonight. I think I'll kill her.'"

Actually, Allan said, the actor tipped him $60.

Allan can spend the money on some molasses, which he uses to treat his elk-hide bag. "Molasses keeps the bag supple and it also keeps it airtight," he said.

In lieu of molasses, may we suggest the lemon mustard sauce at Morton's?

WAIT 'TIL NEXT YEAR: The entertainment reporter was taking his wife to the Academy Awards so he decided to go all-out and hire a limo for the big night. After the show was over, he instructed the driver to head over to Chasen's in Beverly Hills, where Paramount was celebrating the "Braveheart" Oscars. The ride was a long one—too long, the reporter realized. It was then he discovered that the limo was rambling through Woodland Hills, where no studio parties were in evidence. The reporter instructed the driver to take him and his wife home. A little violin music, please.



They may have to raise the price to $99 only to pay the rent on Rodeo Drive.

REALITY CHECK: We've always hesitated to reveal our personal political preferences. But, heck, we admit, it—we're a Bob Dornan man. Alas, the old redhead's 1% showing in California's Republican presidential primary was, well, discouraging. That's why we're making a personal appeal. Bob, it's time to drop out of the White House race and throw your support to a candidate who's more likely to win. Like comic Pat Paulsen, for instance.

DOG GONE: Michael Hirsh, who found today's misspelled no poochee sign at a market in Calabasas, wonders: "Can I still bring my dog to the market if he promises not to bark?

CENTS AND SENSIBILITY: One business that isn't afraid to poke fun at itself is the 99 Cents Only store chain, whose promotions have included a bridal registry. This is the same company whose trucks say, "Driver Carries 99 Cents Only."

One of the chain's newest jokes is a recurring newspaper ad in which it seeks a location in Beverly Hills.

"Believe it or not, we have gotten offers from people who have properties on Canon, on Beverly Drive, on Wilshire Boulevard," said Vice President Tony Ciulla. "Of course, the property on Rodeo is so expensive. Can you imagine what Gucci and Ferragamo and the rest of those people would think? I think they'd pay us to leave if we did get a property there."

How bout nice quiet ones, like snakes?

FORGET THE MAINE: Daniel Pink saw a pickup truck with a license that said, XLAGAL—a Maine plate. It also displayed a bumper sticker that proclaimed, "Maine: A Way of Life." Oddly enough, Pink saw XLAGAL on Pico Boulevard in West L.A. Maybe she was looking for Chasen's.

miscellANy:

Could Bob Dole be fated to take California in the November election? After all, the title of a collection of essays by Richard Meltzer is, "L.A. is the Capital of Kansas."

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